

The RYERSON
POETRY
CHAP-BOOKS



At Summer's
End

By

AMELIA WENSLEY

*This is Chap-Book Number Ninety-five.
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BY AMELIA WENSLEY, TWO HUNDRED AND
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MISS WENSLEY is a Canadian, prairie born, of English and Scotch ancestry. She was educated at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Toronto. For several years she has been English Instructor at the Government Correspondence School in Regina.

Her poems have appeared in the *Canadian Forum*, *Canadian Poetry Magazine* and other Canadian Publications.

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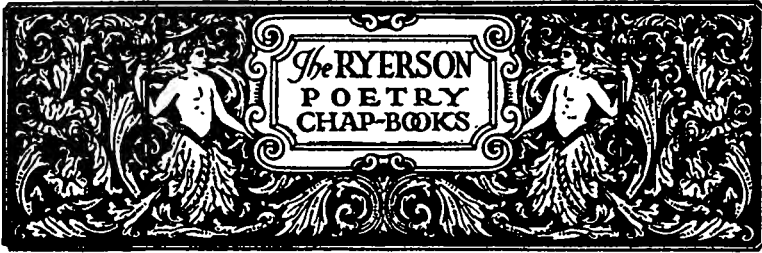
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At Summer's End

By Amelia Wensley

AT summer's end
A shrill cricket songs
tear at
the brittle silken edge
of heat . . .
Grasshoppers beat
across the sifting road
in hard gray hosts . . .
dry-winged.

Gulls darken
the contracting glass
of lake . . .
or aimless hundreds
fly against the hours,
the bitter cry
wearied to silence.

Lowering like a
circus tent,
the zenith,
smoke-white—
echoes the straining voice
of the ringmaster . . .
(How the crickets
shriek!)

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And stooks like
golden loafers,
leaned negligent
upon a tawny field,
write the last page of summer
with an idle hand.

(Published in Alberta Poetry Year Book, 1939-40, Honourable Mention.)

QUERY

THE wind blows chill
From off a thousand stars—
Down to me—
It says—
Hello,
Walking mortal . . .

And I say
Wind—I
Remember him . . .
He is not here—
Did I love him,
Wind?

But the wind
Says—I
Bring you
Autumn smoke—
Pungent, keen—
And I rustle the leaves
Like paper—
I warn you
Of Winter . . .
But
I do not know
Love . . .
I blow
Off a thousand thousand glittering stars,
Walking mortal,
But I do not know
Your pain.

TRIVIA

I SAID I'd shape a poem
Like stone or granite
Hewn and chipped—
Like wrought iron
Strong and fine
And delicately finished
With a touch of filagree—

But at my window
Spring's light heart
Shows only trivia.

Light that glows
Day-long
On silver poplar trunks and branching tips . . .
Swimming . . . warm . . .
The glisten of wet gravel—
Tawny rags of old dead grass—

Hollow echoing of feet
On bare board walks
After the muffled intercourse with
Snow . . .

A handsbreadth mirror-pool
Upon the drive
Setting in blue
The shining torso of a tree . . .

A sun
That blinds a host
Of blocked-out beings
On the street—
An April wind
Scandalizing
That the prairie flirts with spring—

Two so fickle
Have won me from sadder things!

A BIRD IS AN OUTMODED THING

A BIRD is an outmoded thing
When planes
Sow night with little glittering,
Red, green—and roar each heart beat.

Why should a white gull bank upon the wind
And shining cut a delicate design
Against the sky? Beyond
The stiffened strut and wing there is no more to know
Of flight and mystery—

That sputtering heart is here
In fashion. Take it apart,
It runs again—sure as the searchlight's glare
That after fog locates all wreckage—

Admire this new,
This steel and tight design—
(Only the slow, imperfect bird that flew
Had such a perishable heart—
Burned such a subtle fuel—)

A bird is an outmoded thing . . .

(Published in the *Canadian Forum*.)

OCTOBER'S TUNE

THESE bronze and brittle castanets,
The leaves,
Strike on the
Fingers of the wind
October's tune—
Bold is their dance
Against a glass of sky
Hard-polished on the
Sand of summer days.

I hear the geese forsake us—
With a cry
Anticipating
Happier destinations—

Then could I gladly
With you
Bid all the suns
Of autumn pass
Into white winter.

But alone
I plead again for the green world's
Recall—
Mourning a brighter land
And dear companions—
Lost
With autumn.

Confess—
It is from you
I part—
Ache and regret
For you, not leafy summer
Striking bronze castanets
Upon my heart.

RETURN ENGAGEMENT

WE four were laughing on the shore—
(As I stood on the stair)
The sand was white
And slightly-driven by the wind—
Across the lake
The pines were carved and still—

Happy—I walked that day again,
And knew good comrades—
Breathing the summer air
With scent of grass warm-steeped
In July sun . . .

Warm-steeped,
The grasses held—then fled—
At those who walked the shore
And laughed, I looked,
A moment sad—
(Then standing on the stair
I knew
That one of us was dead.)

MAY ORCHESTRA

I WORK with birdsong at my ear—
The low sky overhead.
A stolen glance shows circling rhythm
Of wings
Far-off—and near.

A redwing trilling for his folk,
Glossy among the uncurled leaves—
An oriole's liquid and insistent cries—
I know a melody the warblers shake.

A little shower of notes
A wren sings—and a robin.
Long the proud oriole calls through the
Bright hour—
And flames and floats!

Among the trees
The sparrows chatter, and are gone.
And still the redwing trills
And trills, and loves each pause.

Upon the sill of June
The warbler's bouquet of sweet sound
Falls like an invitation rich and
New—
And still the blackbird trills,
The hours to bind.

As from afar, a mourning dove is heard,
And still the warbler ties rosettes of
Sound,
And still the blackbird trills,
And is not tired . . .

Finale comes with the rich thrasher's song—
A repertoire showy and complete—
When May holds tryout for her orchestra
Time is forgot—

SEPTEMBER NEWSCAST

MORNING—and a deep mist
Sifting . . .
Poplar leaves
Are lightly agitated by a
White, sweet rain . . .

Music flares from
A radio—
“Bombs fall on London”—
Like a pain
Put by in sleep—
(One winces
At its thrust, again.)

Yesterday's sun
Had washed the world
Quite free
And sane!

The mist thins off—
Ah, see! Magenta fire—
A single sumach bush
Picked out
On gold and green—
How daring its surprise!

How strange the miracle of beauty—
Like death,
How sudden-keen!
“Bombs fall on London,”
Radios blare,
“From dusk to dawn.”

PRAIRIE GARDEN

MAY summer has sown
A wild plum tree,
Flowering, twisted and sweet—
Saskatchewan heat
Licks face and hair—
Sun everywhere
Down the wind
Is a shouting and roistering joy.

Grass teases a
Handsbreadth of shadow
And shine
In hard-polished green—
Poplar leaves'
Small clipt conversations
Are stirring old coulees and sloughs—

A maple hangs clustering leaves
Like clutching birds' claws
Holding tight
The dry heat,
That in spite of them
Beats on the air
With heavy wild fragrance of rigid gray willows—
The blossoming chokecherry's tang—
Winds pause
To the pungent and dusty salute
Of the grass—

If you asked me
How summer has come
To the prairie,
I'd see
The twisted, branched tree
White-starred—
And swallows' wings
Cutting a pattern
Like notes of new music
Delighting the page of the sky—
Cloud-scattered,
Wind-widened—
The singer
Is summer, uprisen from sleep,
On the road, striding free,
A shouting and roistering joy.

(Written from an afternoon in Mary Weekes' garden.)

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Lorne Pierce—Editor

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